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**MENTORING JUNIOR LEADERS:
LEADERSHIP TOOLS FOR OUR 21ST CENTURY ARMY**

BY

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Mentoring Junior Leaders: Leadership Tools For Our 21st Century Army

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ABSTRACT

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This study provides a how-to manual for current U.S. Army battalion commanders. It is designed to promote successful mentorship for junior officers. As our Army transitions into the XXI century, we cannot afford to continue the leadership practices that have dominated our Army over the past ten years. Ineffective leadership, attributed in part to a lack of successful mentoring, has been one of the factors that have led to unusually high attrition of junior officers. Senior leadership has determined that ineffective mentoring is one of the causes for this extraordinarily high attrition rate. This study describes effective mentoring, tells how to do it, and shows its benefits for the mentor, junior officers, and the Army. It serves as a supplement to FM 22-100, Army Leadership. Combined with other proven leadership principles, time-tested in this country's business community, effective mentoring will aid our Army in the total transformation process that our Chief of Staff of the Army, General Shinseki, initiated in 1999.

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PREFACE

This study of mentoring is very relevant for our XXI Century Army. Clearly, the development of our junior officers is crucial to the long-term effectiveness and vitality of our Army. Besides transforming our tactics, techniques, and procedures for our future objective force, we must devote time and energy to the process of mentoring our junior officers. If we do this properly, they will someday be the leaders of the objective force and continue the legacy of mentoring as part of our Army culture.

I acknowledge the steadfast assistance and motivation to finish this project from LTC Gregg Martin. He has been a tremendous source of great knowledge, inspiration, and leadership as I researched, drafted, and revised this study.

Current senior leaders stress the need for better mentoring of our junior officers. Those of us approaching this senior level of leadership share a professional obligation to address this pressing issue. This study is designed to stimulate thought and to promote constructive actions towards better mentoring. Surely there are better ways to carry out this critical task of mentoring these younger soldiers.

It is my profound hope that this study and paper will serve as a catalyst for our battalion commanders to better mentor our junior officers. If this occurs, the efforts of our leaders will have been well directed and their time well spent. In the end, we will have contributed to the development and success of many generations of future senior Army leaders.

MENTORING JUNIOR LEADERS – LEADERSHIP TOOLS FOR OUR XXI CENTURY ARMY

I think that all young people – all people, for that matter – are anxious for opportunities to grow, to fulfill themselves, to be all they can be ... thirsting for opportunity to be bold and creative to make use of all the God-given talents that one has. We must enlist the God-given talents of everybody.

— General John A. Wickham, Thirtieth Chief of Staff, United States Army

Within the past year, several important events have occurred within the senior ranks of our Army. The Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) commissioned a Blue Ribbon Panel to study leadership and training, surveying and interviewing over 14,000 officers and senior noncommissioned officers. The results of this report have not been published, but they will likely mirror the comments echoed by the Command and General Staff College Class of 2000 almost a year ago. Students at Fort Leavenworth stated then that our Army faces significant morale and attrition problems. They cited many contributing factors, to include a lack of mentoring and a feeling of being out of touch with the senior leadership of the Army. Not surprisingly, the voluntary attrition rate for our junior officers has risen dramatically over the past year. This leap in attrition, most notably in the ranks of captain, has certainly attracted the attention of all senior leaders, Congress, and the officer corps at large. In 2000, the attrition rate for captains rose to a ten-year high of 10.6 percent from a rate of 6.7 percent in 1990. While the causes for this increased attrition are difficult to pinpoint, mentoring can clearly play an important role in reversing this trend and developing junior leaders to lead our future Army.

SITUATION REPORT – YEAR 2001

Numerous reports and articles attempt to explain the cause for our current attrition problems. These include Leonard Wong's recently published Strategic Studies Institute article. He recommends several policies and actions to improve junior officer retention. Among those policies and actions, he recommends that senior officers "Really mentor junior officers. Senior officers need to pull in junior officers and talk with (not to) them."¹

Clearly, lack of mentoring is one cause of our current attrition and morale problem. In a recent Army Times article, Sean Naylor reports that General Keane; Vice Chief of Staff of the Army (VCSA) blames the Army's leadership culture for our loss of younger officers. The VCSA asserts that the "quality of leadership – as reflected in the mentoring process – has fallen off."² General Keane contends that our Army is sorely in need of positive leadership.

We're just not taking the time that we need to spend with our youngsters and their personal growth and development. We need to do more of that.³

Transforming our Army requires more than acquisition of equipment and development of new doctrine. In his Eisenhower Luncheon speech to the Association of the United States Army (AUSA) on 17 October 2000, the CSA stressed that we must also transform how we grow and take care of our soldiers. General Shinseki shared his vision for developing the human dimension of our profession. "It's our duty to develop soldiers and leaders who have the skills necessary to succeed today and in the future."⁴ Likewise, General John A. Wickham, thirtieth Chief of Staff of the Army, designated 1985 as the Year of Leadership. In his White Paper on the leadership issue, he urged all leaders in the Army to "Be a teacher and mentor to the officers, NCOs (noncommissioned officers), soldiers and civilians entrusted to you."⁵

Battalion-level leaders who mentor well can expect numerous positive pay-offs to the individual being mentored, the mentee; to the organization; and the mentor, himself or herself. The battalion is the ideal organization for mentoring. Corporate research recommends that "The type of organization that would be a willing user of mentorship as an on-the-job training technique is described as follows: an organization with enhanced opportunity, with enthusiasm for innovation versus conservative resistance, and with structural supports for more equal treatment of women and minorities."⁶ In most cases, Army battalions have these characteristics and are commanded by our best lieutenant colonels, centrally selected by selection boards that seek out superb leaders. In an organization ideally suited for mentorship, there should be an age difference between the mentor and the mentee. "Most studies of mentoring find the mentor usually eight to 15 years and beyond the age of the mentee."⁷ The average age of a battalion commander is 41; the average age of lieutenants and captains in a battalion is 23 years and 29 years, respectively. Major General Kenneth Jolemore's research while Commandant of the Armed Forces Staff College finds that "One thing more about mentoring that seems historically consistent is that prestige jobs are important. Sitting near the seat of power provides an opportunity to learn in a short time what the mentor might have learned over 25 to 30 years or more."⁸ So battalion commanders are clearly positioned to mentor junior officers and aid in transforming the Army to meet the CSA's intent. The Army's premier manual on leadership, FM 22-100, states that "Mentoring is totally inclusive, real-life leader development for every subordinate."⁹ General Shinseki believes Army leaders do two things every day: "We train soldiers and we grow them into leaders."¹⁰ If we commit to mentoring our junior leaders at the battalion level, we can contribute significantly to transforming our Army. Then all concerned will reap the benefits of mentoring as described by leadership expert Michael Zey:

Possibly the most novel finding of this investigation concerns the role of mentoring in organization development. In addition to enhancing the careers of

the mentor and the protégé, the mentoring process humanizes the environment for the protégé and functions as a mechanism for integrating the protégé into the corporate structure and culture. It also serves to increase the skills and effectiveness of both the mentor and the protégé. As we have observed, these processes in combination can contribute to an increase in productivity and a reduction in turnover.¹¹

If mentoring is so valuable, why aren't we mentoring well in the Army? We have noted that effective mentoring yields tremendous positive benefits for the Army; for the mentee – our junior officers; and the mentor – the battalion commander. Perhaps we just don't understand what mentoring is and is not, and how to do it well.

MENTORSHIP DEFINED

Consider the origins of the word mentor. Major General Kenneth Jolemore explains that "In Homer's *Odyssey*, Athena, the goddess of war and wisdom, disguises herself as Odysseus' friend, the old man Mentor. In such guise, she advises and teaches Telemachus, the son of Odysseus, during Odysseus' 10-year odyssey."¹² Thus an epic character of divine dimensions gave rise to the concept of mentoring.

Our latest Army manual on leadership, FM 22-100 with Change 1, provides the following definition. "Mentoring is the proactive development of each subordinate through observing, assessing, coaching, teaching, developmental counseling, and evaluating that results in people being treated with fairness and equal opportunity. Mentoring is an inclusive process (not an exclusive one) for everyone under a leader's charge."¹³ Free and open communication, role-modeling values, frequent and effective use of teaching and counseling techniques, and open trust between both the mentor and the mentee characterize mentoring.

Organizational literature, where most research on mentoring is reported, offers several definitions. According to mentorship expert Margo Murray, mentoring is "A deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled or experienced one, with the agreed-upon goal of having the lesser skilled person grow and develop specific competencies."¹⁴ Leadership authority Michael Zey defines a mentor as "A person who oversees the career and development of another person, usually a junior, through teaching, counseling, providing psychological support, protecting, and at times promoting or sponsoring."¹⁵ In business, failure to mentor junior executives often leads to losing them, "Since the unmentored manager does not have a senior executive showing him the ropes and explaining how to advance, he often leaves the organization in search of career success."¹⁶ Business professional Gerald Roche's research suggests: "most executives view the first fifteen years of their career as the learning

and growing period.”¹⁷ These same executives also report an over seventy percent substantial influence on their career by a mentor, strengthening their loyalty and commitment to remain in the same organization.

Webster’s Third New International Dictionary defines a mentor as “A close, trusted, and experienced counselor or guide <every one of us needs a mentor> who, because he is detached and disinterested, can hold up a mirror to us.”¹⁸ The Random House Unabridged Dictionary, (Second Edition) offers a similar definition: A mentor is “A wise and trusted counselor or teacher, an influential senior sponsor or supporter.”¹⁹

We should note that mentoring and mentorship can be used interchangeably – but the first term refers to the act of mentoring, while the second refers to the mentor’s role. Also, for the purpose of this discussion, the word mentee refers to the individual being mentored – the junior officer. It is also important to note what mentoring is not. Mentoring does not refer to the ‘good old boy’ network, nor is it something that comes naturally to all leaders. Further, research reveals that formal mentorship programs have numerous disadvantages and that informal mentorship programs have the best chance of succeeding.

The major impediment to conducting an ideal informal mentoring program at the battalion level is time. In order for the battalion commander to mentor successfully, for the junior officers to prosper as mentees, and for the organization to reap the benefits of a well-organized and well-executed mentorship program, the Army must transform junior officer development by endorsing and supporting mentorship programs at the battalion level.

According to our current VCSA, the legacy that the best unit commanders leave:

is not how well they run their organizations, [it] is their investment in their youngsters – their soldiers, their sergeants, their officers and their personal growth and development. Keane’s comments were the first by so senior an officer to publicly acknowledge what many company and field-grade officers have been saying for several years: that the quality of leadership – as reflected in the mentoring process – has fallen off.²⁰

Now is the time to transform our Army’s mentorship processes. General Wickham asserted that “I believe the most important legacy that any one of us leaves as a leader is the teaching of younger people, giving of experience to them.... Teaching is a part of mentoring.... Only by teaching can we truly prepare soldiers to be successful and to survive in combat.”²¹ General Wickham goes on to tell us how to mentor:

Mentoring is simply giving of your knowledge to other people ...To be an effective mentor, you need the experience and wisdom of your years, and one vital quality – you have to care.²²

MENTORSHIP TOOLS FOR BATTALION COMMANDERS

TEACHING.

Effective mentors facilitate active learning in the battalion, where junior officers learn specific skills necessary for performing their jobs. Battalion commanders should establish an environment where learning is regarded as important for career development and where the level of instruction can be formal or informal, direct or subtle. Mentors also provide specific knowledge and assets to the mentees to aid them in their career development and personal and professional growth. As teachers, the mentors provide a source of information on the mission and communicate the goals of the battalion and Army. Mentors build confidence, provide career guidance, and allow the mentees to make predictable and honest mistakes in a benign environment.

GUIDING.

Mentors provide the junior officers with the unwritten rules of the battalion and the Army. This institutional information is critical, because individuals who overlook a group norm easily become ostracized. Junior officers need to be able to identify important people in the battalion and brigade, the behavior expected in the battalion, the psychological makeup of the battalion, and the social behavior that is considered a norm to the command group in the battalion.

ADVISING.

When junior officers approach the battalion commander seeking information and guidance, they are seeking advice from the individual they most respect and want to trust. It is critical to point out that advice provided by the mentor, rather than someone else, is expected to be the best advice. The battalion commander draws on an average of 20 years of service and Army wisdom; therefore commander's advice is based on a high level of experience and most of a career. With this kind of advice, the mentee benefits from experiences that normally take most of a career to accumulate. Only by meeting with mentees can mentors effectively assist in plotting a productive career path.

SPONSORING.

Mentors use their clout or influence to provide growth opportunities for the mentee. The most notable historical example is that of General Marshall providing opportunities for General Eisenhower during World War II. When mentors become sponsors, they closely enhance the

career progression of junior officers by assigning them into the correct positions within the battalion or assisting them to locate outside the battalion. When battalion commanders sponsor junior officers, the mentee has gained an opportunity, not a 'free ride.'

ROLE MODELING BEHAVIOR.

General Bruce C. Clarke in his book, Guidelines For The Leader And Commander, stated that:

"Men expect their commanders to know their jobs, to share the hardships with them, and to take a personal interest in their problems. You will not know whether a particular officer or soldier has a problem until someone has heard his case. A willing ear will gain much confidence."²³

It is often said that leaders live in a fish bowl. Junior officers want to emulate their battalion commanders. Battalion commanders and all senior officers in the battalion should behave in a manner that is consistent with the Army values. Battalion commanders who persistently micromanage and incessantly work 18-hour days are not good role models for their junior officers. Rather, junior officers should feel empowered in their jobs and encouraged to work and live in an environment that is free of a zero-defects mentality. Thus, the mentor's behavior, personal traits, and day-to-day actions serve as a blueprint that the mentees internalize to pattern their own behavior. "The mentor epitomizes the mythical 'who you want to be when grow up' or sometimes, 'who you don't want to be.'"²⁴ Effective mentors cannot shirk their role-modeling obligations with the old cop-out of "Do as I say, not as I do."

VALIDATING.

As mentors, battalion commanders must evaluate, modify as needed, and endorse the goals and aspirations of their mentees. Mentors thereby bless the goals and aspirations of junior officers. Validating is much like teaching and counseling, but it pertains specifically to assuring junior officers that their goals are realistic and attainable and that they are consistent with Army values and the vision of senior leadership.

COUNSELING.

Mentors maximize the outcome of counseling by meeting with mentees at agreed upon time intervals for feedback and planning. Mentors must listen to the junior officers and not dominate these critical feedback sessions. Proper counseling will help clarify career goals, provide feasible action plans to achieve these goals, and provide valuable feedback on observed performances. Once the open door and willing ear atmosphere is created, mentors

are positioned to provide emotional support to junior officers in times of crisis. Junior officers want to be able to talk to their battalion commanders in open and productive dialogues. They want to trust their commanders to listen to them and to counsel them sagely.

MOTIVATING.

Battalion commanders who inspire, instill confidence, and believe in the mentee clearly motivate junior officers to attain their goals. Such encouragement, such belief in junior officers, and such genuine concern for their welfare and growth is essential. With the ensuing motivation, mentees get the impetus to achieve their goals. Then they move confidently and expeditiously along their career paths. Of course, they may be motivated best in some instances by a “kick in the pants.” At other times, a “pat on the back” does the trick. Good mentors know what motivating tactics are best in given situations. Regardless of their tactics, they never neglect their obligation to motivate their mentees.

PROTECTING.

Mentors must create an environment where junior officers can make the right kind of mistakes and take proper risks without fear of failure. General Edward C. Meyer, the twenty-ninth Chief of Staff of the Army, declared that “We must all be heat shields for our subordinates and must insist they be the same for theirs...Commanders at every level need to become ‘heatshields.’”²⁵ In such a secure environment, junior officers are able to make mistakes without losing self-confidence. The latest report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies on American Military Culture in the Twenty-First Century recommends that “Micromanagement and a zero-defects standard must be identified as unacceptable command techniques.”²⁶ These are potholes on the road to success. In a more tolerant command climate, mentees can learn, and not feel threatened and constrained.

COMMUNICATING.

Battalion commanders must establish clear and open lines of communication for all junior officers, who should feel that they can easily approach the battalion commander to discuss concerns, career development, or other pertinent matters. If battalion commanders fail to communicate, all other mentoring functions become ineffective. Mentorship expert Margo Murray points out that successful mentors have an innate ability to both talk and listen. They have the capacity to share responsibility for others’ growth. With strong interpersonal skills,

they are people-oriented. General Edward C. Meyer noted the institutional value of effective interpersonal communication:

The profession of arms is a noble profession. The great task of each professional officer is to preserve our institutions through his teaching and example, and to pass on to those who follow his dedication to the profession of arms.²⁷

We all assume the responsibility to be mentors when we are blessed with the opportunity to command. In fact, at any time in our careers, we should willingly assume the role of mentor in our profession as leaders. The payoffs to our Army, to our currently beleaguered junior officers, and to ourselves as mentors and leaders are enormous.

PAYOFFS FOR THE MENTEE – OUR JUNIOR OFFICERS

General Wickham charges Army leaders to facilitate the growth and development of our young people. I contend that battalion commanders, ideally situated for committed and sincere mentorship, must take the time to use the ten mentoring tools as part of their leadership practices. When they do, we can expect significant benefits to those mentored. Our junior officers will be the first to reap the benefits of mentorship. Then they accelerate the benefits of mentoring through newfound confidence and increasing competence, now visible throughout the battalion. They are eager to learn. They enjoy access to their mentor. They take more initiative in self-development. They also are more accessible, both to their charges and to their mentor. In short, effective mentoring leads quickly to a more productive and attractive command climate.

Generally speaking, well-mentored junior officers become more aware of the battalion and Army. They understand what it takes to succeed in their specific branch or career field. These junior officers also understand the importance of the teamwork required to succeed at their level and higher levels. By contrast, unmentored junior officers are often mystified about the Army, unaware or confused about promotion policies and nuances, career opportunities, and opportunities at higher rank levels. They are uncertain about how to succeed, so it is easy to understand why an unmentored junior officer can easily become disillusioned about the Army and career opportunities, compared to well-mentored, and educated junior officers. From his research, Zey concluded, “Since the unmentored manager does not have a senior executive showing him the ropes and explaining how to advance, he often leaves the organization in search of career success.”²⁸ The results of the recent Army Blue Ribbon Panel will confirm that our junior officers believe that mentorship pays, is desired, and is needed at the battalion level. Over 14,000 officers and senior noncommissioned officers participated in the study, the majority of which were lieutenants and captains.

When battalion commanders invest time in mentoring junior officers, the junior officers begin to acquire a very detailed and comprehensive knowledge of the battalion and Army. Junior officers then understand the organizational structure, environmental dynamics, and personalities that contribute to better decision-making abilities. With this enhanced knowledge, junior officers are better able to make career decisions and understand the institutional culture beyond the limits of the battalion. By contrast, the unmentored junior officers tend to have less understanding of the operation of the organization, how decisions are made, and how policies are executed. This lack of understanding creates uncertainty and ambiguity in young officers' minds. It tends to alienate them from the day-to-day operations in the battalion.

Battalion commanders who successfully mentor junior officers can expect their increased commitment to the battalion and the Army. Mentored junior officers are generally more likely to consider the Army as a career choice. Through mentoring, junior officers feel closer to the battalion and share the organizational goals of both the battalion and the Army. Lack of mentoring contributes significantly to high turnover and attrition because unmentored junior officers lack connectedness to the Army culture. According to United States Military Academy leader development expert Colonel Joseph LeBoeuf, "the big issue in the retention area is the mentoring issue, although it is embedded in a larger context of overall officer development."²⁹

Mentored junior officers tend to enjoy a high level of job satisfaction. They are eager to be team players in the battalion and Army. As mentors, battalion commanders enrich junior officers' work experience. In their contacts with junior officers, battalion commanders teach, advise, and counsel them on their performance. When this feedback is positive, it makes junior officers' jobs more enjoyable and meaningful. Using the tools of successful mentoring, battalion commanders show junior officers that they care about their growth and development. The reverse tends to be true for unmentored junior officers. Their job performance and job satisfaction is not nearly as high.

Mentored junior officers tend to become more optimistic, with clearer career objectives. Their battalion commanders' frequent interactions and feedback assists them in establishing clear career goals and objectives with an increased level of confidence and purpose. Left unmentored, junior officers are generally more susceptible, with lowered career expectations and little comprehension on how to succeed. They have no set roadmap for career success.

Mentoring offers clear benefits to junior officers in our Army battalions. Commanders' time devoted to the success of junior officers assist not only in their development and career goals, but also helps reduce junior officer attrition. In time, mentoring yields future leaders that

are more confident, less mobile, better-educated, and more satisfied with their work and career progress. Mentoring yields numerous other benefits for the battalion and Army, consistent with the innovative XXI century leadership mandate as outlined in our leadership manual and comments from our Chief of Staff of the Army. It is time to use mentoring as a leadership tool to assist in junior officer development.

PAYOUTS FOR THE INSTITUTION – OUR ARMY

The payoffs to the battalion and Army derive from the time intensive interactions of the battalion commanders and junior officers during the mentoring process. There are positive, valuable results of this positive leadership style, supported by research within the corporate business environment. Michael Zey's conclusions are based on detailed research conducted "from the middle and the senior management of companies in the Fortune 500 manufacturing groups, the top retail corporations, and the largest banks in the Northeast."³⁰ A very diverse group of individuals, from "the young 30s to the 60s"³¹ comprised the research population. I assert that these business results, interpolated at the present time to model the Army, will be substantiated by the results of the Blue Ribbon Panel. All told, the synergistic result is an increase in junior officer integration, retention, communication, leader development, and productivity.

When battalion commanders buy into the mentoring process, they enable junior officers to feel closer to the battalion and the Army. Mentored junior officers tend to be more receptive to Army goals, mores, and objectives. They experience a greater sense of belonging and acceptance in the Army.

Junior officer attrition rates will probably decrease as battalion commanders more actively mentor junior officers. Research substantiates that the mentor relationship prevents talented mentees from being consumed by or misdirected in the organizational bureaucracy in the business world.³² Because the mentoring process provides substantially more positive feedback than no mentoring process, junior officers are more inclined to remain in the Army. Their sense of loyalty for the mentor thus reduces attrition and increases organizational bonds and retention.

Increased feelings of worth and belonging to the organization also promote healthy and open communication between the mentored junior officer and all layers of command in the battalion. The mentored junior officer is more likely to enjoy membership status in the battalion and become more of a team player within the battalion. This will ultimately lead to an increase in productivity as well.

The mentor relationship also promotes junior officers' skill development. The net result is an increase in productivity in the battalion. While not a direct result of mentoring, the cumulative result of increased confidence, a sense of belonging, skill development, and overall optimism leads to an informal reorganization of the battalion, now ready to operate more efficiently. These combined organizational payoffs are healthy for the battalion. But the most important payoff is the increased leadership development of the junior officers themselves. In the final analysis, good mentoring is good leadership. As beneficiaries of good mentoring, junior officers then become effective mentors to their own charges.

The Battalion Commander serves as the hub, passing along to junior officers the "skills and knowledge that would otherwise be denied to him."³³ As mentors, battalion commanders transform the junior officer from a junior technical worker to a full-fledged junior executive and full-fledged member of the battalion and Army. This investment in time and development – really just showing our junior officers that we care – offers exponential rewards to the Army. Battalion commanders can reduce the haphazardness of unmentored leader development and produce leaders that will serve our Army well into the twenty-first century. General Shinseki summed it up well in 1999:

The development of bold, innovative leaders of character and competence is fundamental to the long-term health of the Army.³⁴

PAYOUTS FOR THE MENTOR – THE BATTALION COMMANDER WHO INVESTS THE TIME

As leaders, mentoring is a key way in which we exercise leadership and strengthen Army values. Giving of ourselves by sharing our knowledge and experience is the most important legacy we can leave to those who follow.³⁵

— General John A. Wickham

General Wickham and General Shinseki share a similar philosophy on leader development. Mentoring is a viable method to assist Army leaders in meeting their vision of leadership. As effective mentors, battalion commanders can realize some genuine gains. Among these is a sense of pride in the accomplishments of their junior officers. Mentors share a tremendous sense of pride when their mentees do well and advance in the Army. Such second-order benefits of mentoring relationships may then positively affect the mentor's career.

Mentors may also derive positive psychological rewards from successful mentoring. They tend to feel an increased sense of worth due to the positive contributions made to the battalion and the Army. Second order effects of this increased pride and sense of worth in the mentor are increased productivity and greater loyalty to the Army.

One more positive payoff for the mentors is the personal satisfaction that comes from teaching. Teachers play an important role in everyone's life. The inherent awareness of continuity of one's own work and ego gratification are personally rewarding for mentors.

So if mentoring is such a good thing, and if the payoffs to the mentor, the mentee, and the organization are all extremely positive, why don't we do it well in our Army? Clearly our Army leadership and written manuals assert its importance. Our junior officers say that they want to be mentored. One failure to mentor resides in our most precious resource – time.

WHY MENTORING DOES NOT OCCUR IN OUR ARMY

We are not mentoring the way our Army leadership doctrine would have us. Indeed many officers may not understand what mentoring is or how to mentor or and what to expect from mentoring. Field Manual 22-100, Army Leadership, is vague and only mentions mentoring in a few examples. Our Army also suffers from many self-inflicted distractors that keep mentoring from being done properly. In 1990, an Army War College student observed:

It is evident that the Army greatly misconceives the mentoring process as a whole. The phenomenon of mentoring is not clearly conceptualized; this leads to confusion about just what it is, what it does, and how the process works.³⁶

Evidence from the past several years from our junior company grade and field grade officers supports this assertion. Further, over the past ten years, our Army has become smaller and busier. The Center for Strategic and International Studies concluded in their 2000 report that "Morale and readiness are suffering from force reductions, high operating tempo, and resource constraints; culture may suffer in the longer term."³⁷ The report also stated that "Strong local leadership, which is not uniformly in place today, is essential for maintaining the vibrant organizational climate essential for operational effectiveness in the twenty-first century. Present leader development systems, however, are not up to the task of consistently identifying and advancing highly competent leaders."³⁸

All evidence indicates an overburdened and busy schedule for our Army as well as an inadequate leader development program for our twenty-first century Army. We must strive to inculcate the mentoring methodology in our current pre-command course instruction and senior service schools. Methods to inculcate mentoring in our professional military education system include seminar discussions, academic reading, review of case studies, and prominent guest lecturers. Battalion commanders need the tools to be successful mentors. Our Army must empower our battalion commanders with the task of mentoring and provide them the time to accomplish the task. Leadership and mentoring researchers and experts report that all senior leaders will benefit from a thorough understanding of mentoring.

METHODS TO CREATE TIME FOR BATTALION COMMANDERS TO MENTOR

To free up time at the battalion level, our Army must shift from current perceived and often factual practices of senior level micromanagement and zero-defects leadership practices, to those that empower our leaders to lead and develop subordinates in a healthy command climate. The Center for Strategic and International Studies concluded in their 2000 report with the following recommendations:

The national command authority as well as DOD and DOT must correct the imbalance between mission requirements and available resources at the operating levels of the armed forces. Micromanagement and a zero-defects standard must be identified as unacceptable command techniques.³⁹

Simply put, a healthy command climate supported by our senior leaders, along with a decrease in operating tempo and more predictable schedules, will free up time for battalion commanders to mentor. Given this, the battalion commander can create an environment that allows time for mentoring junior officers.

THE COUP DE GRACE – BATTALION COMMANDERS THAT MENTOR

Armed with time, a healthy command climate and senior leader support, the battalion commander can now use the ten tools of mentoring to grow successful, productive, loyal, and committed junior officers.

Through mentoring, they can create a healthy command climate in the battalion built on trust, competence, empowerment, visibility, and a willingness to care for every soldier and family member. Battalion commanders should allow the field grade officers, command sergeants major, and staff to run the battalion. The commander should command the battalion. Through proper delegation of responsibility, commanders are freed to serve as mentors.

Battalion commanders should enforce training schedule predictability and create an environment where every junior officer looks up and says, “I want to be like the Battalion Commander some day.” Commanders with visibility in the battalion gained by mentoring, not by working long hours due to micromanagement are desired and needed. By empowering all leaders and through creating an environment where everyone is not threatened by making a mistake, commanders will be emulated and admired.

Battalion commanders must understand that junior officer development is crucial to the long-term health and vitality of our Army. Today's lieutenants and captains will run our Army twenty years from now. It is our responsibility as leaders to serve others. In the words of one senior leader, “The purpose of senior military leadership is to accomplish assigned missions by making subordinates successful, without seeking self-aggrandizement.”⁴⁰

Senior leaders at the brigade level and above must support the battalion commander in this endeavor. Given the current state of affairs in our Army and the direction we are embarked upon in the twenty-first century, the time is right for mentoring at the battalion level. The battalion commander is the key to success, ideally situated both to mentor and to demonstrate to future leaders the value of mentoring.

CONCLUSION

The time is now for senior leaders and their immediate successors to address the challenge of junior officer attrition. Leadership expert Colonel Joseph LeBoeuf states that:

Junior officers have tremendous expectations of what they will receive when they enter the Army. They expect to be able to learn their craft, to have great learning and developmental experiences, and to feel like they are valued members of the profession, worthy of attention from more senior officers. Leaders not only operate, but they are duty bound to improve the organization. This includes the effective development of junior leaders. Many senior leaders do not understand the importance of reflection, support and adequate performance and learning based feedback. These later behaviors are central ingredients to mentoring relationships.⁴¹

This study seeks to persuade battalion commanders to mentor our junior officers. If this occurs, their efforts will have been well directed and their time well spent. In the words of management experts David Hunt and Carol Michael:

Professionals who were mentored themselves are likely to become mentors of succeeding generations of professionals.⁴²

In the end, we will have contributed to the development and success of many generations of future senior Army leaders.

Word Count = 5,701

ENDNOTES

¹ Leonard Wong, "GENERATIONS APART: Xers and Boomers in the Officer Corps," U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, October 2000: 22.

² Sean D. Naylor, "Keane Blames Leadership for Junior Officer Exodus," Army Times, 25 December 2000, p. 10.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Eric K. Shinseki, "CSA Keynote Address, AUSA Eisenhower Luncheon, October 17, 2000," 2000; available from <<http://www.army.mil/csa/speeches.htm>>; Internet, accessed 16 December 2000.

⁵ Lieutenant General Charles W. Bagnal, Earl C. Pence, and Lieutenant Colonel Thomas N. Meriwether, "Leaders as Mentors," Military Review 7 (July 1985): 6.

⁶ David Marshall Hunt and Carol Michael, "Mentorship: A Career Training and Development Tool," Academy of Management Review 3 (July 1983): 479.

⁷ Major General Kenneth A. Jolemore, "The Mentor: More Than a Teacher, More Than a Coach," Military Review 7 (July 1986): 15.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

⁹ Department of the Army, Army Leadership, Field Manual 22-100 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 31 August 1999), 5-16.

¹⁰ Eric K. Shinseki, "CSA Keynote Address, AUSA Eisenhower Luncheon, October 17, 2000," 2000; available from <<http://www.army.mil/csa/speeches.htm>>; Internet, accessed 16 December 2000.

¹¹ Michael G. Zey, The Mentor Connection (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 214-215.

¹² Major General Kenneth A. Jolemore, "The Mentor: More Than a Teacher, More Than a Coach," Military Review 7 (July 1986): 6-7.

¹³ Department of the Army, Army Leadership, Field Manual 22-100 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 31 August 1999), 5-16.

¹⁴ Margo Murray and Marna A. Owen, Beyond The Myths And Magic Of Mentoring (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1991), xiv.

¹⁵ Michael G. Zey, The Mentor Connection (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁷ Gerald R. Roche, "Much Ado about Mentors," Harvard Business Review (January-February 1979): 20.

¹⁸ Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged (1993), s.v. "Mentor."

¹⁹ Random House Unabridged Dictionary, Second Edition (1993), s.v. "Mentor."

²⁰ Sean D. Naylor, "Keane Blames Leadership for Junior Officer Exodus," Army Times, 25 December 2000, p. 10.

²¹ John A. Wickham Jr., "Collected Works of the Thirtieth Chief of Staff, United States Army," 1983-1987; available from <<http://call.army.mil/call/csa/wickham.htm>>; Internet, accessed 16 December 2000.

²² Ibid.

²³ Bruce C. Clarke, Guidelines For The Leader And The Commander (Harrisburg: Stackpole Books, 1973), 8.

²⁴ Daniel Lea and Zandy B. Leibowitz, "A mentor: Would You Know One if You Saw One?" Supervisory Management, April 1983, 34.

²⁵ Edward C. Meyer, "E. C. Meyer, General, United States Army Chief of Staff June 1979-June 1983," 1979-1983; available from <<http://call.army.mil/call/csa/meyer.htm>>; Internet, accessed 16 December 2000.

²⁶ Center for Strategic and International Studies, American Military Culture in the Twenty-First Century (Washington, D.C.: The CSIS Press, February 2000), 79.

²⁷ Edward C. Meyer, "E. C. Meyer, General, United States Army Chief of Staff June 1979-June 1983," 1979-1983; available from <<http://call.army.mil/call/csa/meyer.htm>>; Internet, accessed 16 December 2000.

²⁸ Michael G. Zey, The Mentor Connection (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 72.

²⁹ Joseph LeBoeuf <LJ4657@exmail.usma.army.mil>, "Thank You," electronic mail message to Matthew Hale <Matthew.Hale@Carlisle.Army.Mil>, 20 December 2000.

³⁰ Ibid., 218.

³¹ Ibid., 218.

³² Michael G. Zey, The Mentor Connection (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 71.

³³ Ibid., 93.

³⁴ Center for Strategic and International Studies, American Military Culture in the Twenty-First Century (Washington, D.C.: The CSIS Press, February 2000), 70.

³⁵ John A. Wickham Jr., "Collected Works of the Thirtieth Chief of Staff, United States Army," 1983-1987; available from <<http://call.army.mil/call/csa/wickham.htm>>; Internet, accessed 16 December 2000.

³⁶ Gail W. Wood, Mentoring: A Useful Concept for Leader Development in the Army?, Strategy Research Project (Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army War College, 11 April 1990), 75.

³⁷ Center for Strategic and International Studies, American Military Culture in the Twenty-First Century (Washington, D.C.: The CSIS Press, February 2000), 78.

³⁸ Ibid., 79.

³⁹ Ibid., 78-79.

⁴⁰ Dick Kail, Professional Perspectives for Senior Officers (Englewood, Colorado: Officer's Christian Fellowship of the U.S.A., 1992), 29.

⁴¹ Joseph LeBoeuf <LJ4657@exmail.usma.army.mil>, "Questions?," electronic mail message to Matthew Hale <Matthew.Hale@Carlisle.Army.Mil>, 15 March 2001.

⁴² David Marshall Hunt and Carol Michael, "Mentorship: A Career Training and Development Tool," Academy of Management Review 3 (July 1983): 12.

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